

DIVERSION / COUNTERFEITING

Drug Wholesalers rank the internet and mail-order pharmacies as the most common weakness in the current distribution of drugs. These type of outlets are the most common leakage point in the supply of drugs to the consumer. Measures to curb diversion and counterfeiting through internet and mail-order are being addressed by the federal government and numerous state governments working with industry.

DIVERSION

Data from the Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) show that counterfeiting, diversion, and theft are on the rise regarding pharmaceuticals. Diverted goods are those produced by an authorized manufacturer but sold through unauthorized distribution. Drugs may be stolen directly from manufacturing facilities, or during shipping to a primary or secondary wholesaler. The transfer of drugs between primary and secondary wholesalers and then between wholesalers and pharmacies opens opportunities for theft.

COUNTERFEITING

Counterfeit branded or generic medicine that may include products with the correct ingredients or with the wrong ingredients, without active ingredients, with insufficient active ingredients, or with fake packaging. Counterfeit drugs enter the supply chain through a variety of schemes.

REPORTING PROBLEMS

To report a problem when purchasing human drugs, animal drugs, medical devices, biological products, foods, dietary supplements, or cosmetics:

- If the problem involves a serious or life threatening situation, call your healthcare professional immediately for medical advice. To report the situation to the **USFDA** (United States Food and Drug Administration) call **1-301-443-1240** or **1-800-FDA-1088**.

- If the problem involves a serious reaction or problem related to your medication, contact your health care professional for advice. To report the situation to the FDA's MedWatch reporting form, go to: www.fda.gov/medwatch.

- For problems with online purchases that do not involve a serious or life threatening reaction, fill out the form at www.fda.gov/oc/buyonline/buy-onlineform.htm.

- To report e-mails or Web sites promoting medical products that might be illegal, forward the material to webcomplaints@ora.fda.gov. **Business Bureau**.

- To report false health claims- Contact the **Federal Trade Commission** call **877-382-4357**.

- If you lose your money, contact the credit card company, the **New Jersey Dept. of Consumer Affairs** **800-242-5846**, or the **NJ Better Business Bureau** **609-588-0808**.

RESOURCES

FDA online: Importing Prescription Drugs.
www.fda.gov/importeddrugs/

List of dietary supplements ingredients for which the FDA has issued warnings
www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ds-warn.html

List of enforcement actions taken against the promoter of drug, food or cosmetic products
www.fda.gov/oc/enforcement.html

The Partnership for safe Medicine.
www.safemedicine.org

**Know your Meds;
Be Aware of Fake
Drugs!**

For PDF printable version of this brochure:
www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/foodweb/



Jon S. Corzine
Governor



BUYING DRUGS ON LINE?

**TIPS TO AVOIDING
COUNTERFEIT DRUGS**



Fred M. Jacobs, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

Food and Drug Safety Program
Consumer and Environmental Health Services
609-588-3123

TIPS TO HELP ENSURE YOUR PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES ARE SAFE:

Don't buy medications from online pharmacies that aren't licensed in a state or that offer to write prescriptions or sell medications without prescriptions.

Avoid drugs in foreign packaging because unregulated imports have been a way for counterfeits to enter the U.S. market. When available, ask for the product in the manufacturer's original package.

Pay attention to packaging. Closely scrutinize the appearance of your medicine and its packaging. Talk to your pharmacist if you notice anything unusual, or if you have a different reaction to your medicine.

Know your medications. If you know the size, shape, color, taste and side effects of the prescriptions you take, you will more easily identify possible counterfeits. Contact your pharmacist or doctor if you notice anything different about a medication.

- Is your condition improving over the course of the treatment with a prescription medicine? If not, contact your physician.

When you buy medications online, make sure the seller is properly licensed. Check with the **New Jersey State Board of Pharmacy - 973-504-6450** or the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy at: www.nabp.net (click on "Who We Are" on the left and then "Boards of Pharmacy" for a list of state boards) or call 1-847-698-6227. These sources can tell you if the pharmacy or online seller is licensed.

REMEMBER!

When you buy drugs from a questionable web site, you just don't know what you're actually getting. The main concerns are that the drugs could be outdated, contaminated, too potent or not potent enough, improperly manufactured and handled or counterfeit.



Look for this symbol to know that the website is certified by the National Association of Board of Pharmacy.(NABP)
The VIPPS Seal informs you the consumer that the site holds valid license, the pharmacy site has been inspected, and its operations meet stringent Internet Pharmacy standards.

Sample: Request samples of your medications from your physician when first having a medication prescribed in order to compare the appearance, taste, texture, and reaction later to medications filled through the doctor's prescription. Manufacturer samples are usually only available for brand name medications and not generics. When available, samples will help patients establish a "baseline" of product characteristics. Save the sample's packaging for future comparison. If using the Internet to purchase drugs, make sure the Web site is a "VIPPS" certified site. For a listing of approved sites, see: www.nabp.net/vipps/consumer/listall.asp. Please note that generics may differ in shape of color and still be a safe and effective product. For specific questions on identification of medications, talk to your pharmacist.

Appearance: Compare the prescription medicine you receive with what it is supposed to look like by taking pictures of the original manufacturer's drug and all associated packaging. You can also find pictures in the Physicians Desk Reference available at your local library. When comparing packaging, look for differences in paper, printing (is it the same size, raised print, embossed, etc.), color, and fonts.

Feel: Take note of the prescription drug's taste and any associated feeling once you take it. For example, if injecting a medication, is it supposed to burn? Is there anything unusual in your body's reaction compared to previous experiences?

Evaluate: How is your body reacting over the course of treatment? Do you feel that you are benefiting from the medication? Is your condition improving, stabilizing, or reverting back to ill health? Ask your doctor pharmacist what you should expect to feel and when you should expect to begin feeling relief or improvement. Remember: counterfeit drugs can contain no active ingredient, not enough, or too much.

Gather: Gather all the information you can find related to how you got the counterfeit medication and how long you have been taking it. One of the key issues is where you purchased the medication. Was it from the Internet, from a mail order, or from a local pharmacy? When did you purchase the medication? Do you still have the packaging? How long have you been taking the counterfeit drugs? If the medication must be taken routinely, you should also contact your physician or pharmacist to arrange for a new supply so that you can resume taking your medication.

